

**Board of County Commissioners
Leon County, Florida**

Attachment # 3
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Date: September 12, 2003
To: Board of County Commissioners
From: Parwez Alam, County Administrator
Subject: Follow-up to District 3 Community Meeting of September 4, 2003

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation was provided by Commissioner Winchester, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Grippa requested a motion designating Commissioner Winchester as the Chairman for his District meeting.

- **Commissioner Thael moved, seconded by Commissioner Sauls, to designate Commissioner Winchester as Chairman for the District 3 meeting.**

The motion carried 5-0, with Commissioners Proctor and Maloy absent.

- **Presentation**

- Materials and childrens' books were on display at the check-in table. Commissioner Winchester showed one of the children's books as an example of books available at the Lake Jackson Branch Library.

- **Speakers:**

- Sarah Johnson, spearheading the drive in support of building a new Lake Jackson library. Ms. Johnson provided information on the present use of the Library and it's inadequacy to accommodate the children's READ program, space for computers, reading space and other space needs.
- Citizens speaking in support of the new Library branch: Linda McCarthy, Sheila Maxwell, Shirley Taylor, Chris Waller, Sarah Michaels, Sonya Chapman, Amy Vasquez, Mark Goldman and Denise Winchester.
- Commissioners Grippa, Sauls, and Rackleff spoke in support of the Library.
- Commissioner Thael stated that the upcoming budget, beginning October 1, 2003, will include \$875,000 for two branch libraries, in District 3 and District 5, which totals \$1.75 million. He stated that he supports libraries but he recommends not building the branch libraries this year and defer the construction for one or two years; the money could be used for Capital costs for the EMS - such as purchasing ambulances, etc., which would completely eliminate the MSTU tax next year for Emergency Medical Services.

- **Status Report on Canopy Oaks Park**

- Josh McSwain, Parks & Recreation, gave an update on the park and it's completion date.
- There were no speakers on this item.

- **Status Report on the Harbinwood Drainage Project**

- Theresa Heiker, Public Works Stormwater Engineer, stated that 20 sites are needed; the County has acquired 6 sites, of which 4 were paid for with Federal money; 1 homeowner declined.
- There were no speakers on this item.

- **Status Reports**

1. **Update on the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA)**

- Assistant County Administrator, Vince Long, explained what a CRA is, how a new CRA is created, and presented the County's objection/argument to the City of Tallahassee's proposed Downtown CRA. Issues addressed in the presentation include:
 - Defined a CRA - a geographically defined area (designated as such under the Community Redevelopment Act), exhibiting pervasive slum and blighted areas. A CRA is established for the purposes of utilizing statutorily permitted economic development tools within the CRA.
 - Illustrated through slides, that the Downtown Tallahassee area does not exhibit pervasive slum and blighted areas but rather consists of highly valued property (law firms, lobbyists' offices, restaurants) and will continue to be a prosperous area
 - Charter counties, as Leon, must approve CRAs, as the County did with the Frenchtown CRA. The Board voted 7-0 against the proposed Downtown Tallahassee CRA.
 - Loophole allows City to expand a CRA (expanding the Frenchtown CRA), without County approval.
 - The County will lose \$80 million over the 20-year period in property tax revenue. The County will have to raise the County millage rate and/or reduce the level of County services - library services, parks and recreation, law enforcement, emergency medical services, etc.
 - The Board announced that there will be a Joint City/County CRA meeting on Monday, September 15th at 3:00 p.m. in City Commission Chambers. The Board urged citizens to contact the City Commission and ask for an immediate halt to the approval of a Downtown CRA.
 - There were no speakers on this item.

2. **Update on Emergency Medical Services**

- Assistant County Administrator, Vince Long, gave a summary of the County's decision to implement a County-run EMS department, that will be activated on January 1, 2004. Mr. Long focused on the positives of the County-run that includes:
 - a continued commitment to provide the highest level of service
 - increased emphasis on training of EMS professionals
 - expanded Advanced Life Support training for first responders to the scene in rural areas (i. e. EMS personnel, City of Tallahassee firefighters) to optimize ability to provide life-saving medical treatment
 - increased emphasis on outreach to the community (training citizens to be "first responders")
 - a commitment to transfer/hire TMH's employees who have knowledge and experience regarding EMS
 - secured a contract with Air Methods Corporation to provide air ambulance emergency medical and transport services at no cost to the community; Air Methods "LifeNet" service will be stationed at Tallahassee airport.
 - source of funding is a Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) of 0.5 mil for the first year of service, and a proposed reduction to 0.2 mil in future years.
 - There were no speakers on this item.

3. Overview of the Fiscal Year 03/04 Operating and Capital Improvement Budget

- Alan Rosenzweig, Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), gave an overview of the FY 03/04 budget - the first budget prepared since Leon County became a Home Rule Charter County. There were handouts available to the public that provided an overview of property tax rates, tax savings and % of total budget assigned to each category of spending. For example, Public Safety, the largest category of spending, receives 32% of total budget. Highlights of the FY 03/04 Budget include:
 - The Fire Services MSTU and Water/Sewer Franchise Fee will be eliminated and replaced with the more equitable Public Services Tax (PST), which is charged to all users of public utilities.
 - The Communications Service Tax (CST) will provide an additional \$1 million/per year in revenue that will be used for the purchase of flooded property and flood mitigation.
 - The second year of the Senior Homestead Exemption provides \$414,000 in savings for seniors claiming the exemption (approx. 1,942).
 - Increased funding for library services.
 - Mr. Rosenzweig highlighted some Capital Projects planned and budgeted for District 3:
 - identify a site for Lake Jackson Branch Library; Jackson View Park enhancements; identify a site for the Lake Jackson Community Center; the Harbinwood Estates Drainage Project; and installing turn lane on North Monroe Street.
 - There were no speakers on this item.
- Commissioner Winchester informed the citizens about the situation regarding pollution from Georgia, in to the Ochlockonee River. He also mentioned the proposed plans for the construction of a landfill on the GA-FLA border and the proposed Tired Creek Reservoir.

Citizens to be Heard

- Sonya Chapman - questioned the traffic capacity on Old Bainbridge Road

Discussion Items by Commissioners

- Commissioner thanked the citizens for coming to the District 3 meeting.
- Commissioner Grippa reminded the citizens to learn about the CRA and contact the City Commissioners.
- Commissioner Winchester explained that the FY03/04 County budget will be voted on this month, which will include the budget for the branch libraries. Commissioner Winchester urged citizens to contact their Commissioners and specify their wishes as it relates to libraries.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.